

Message Text

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PAGE 01 TEL AV 02825 230542Z

56

ACTION NEA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1158

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEL AVIV 2825

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, IS, JO

SUBJECT: ISRAELI ASSESSMENTS OF WEST BANK MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS

BEGIN SUMMARY: TWO ISRAELI OFFICIALS WITH LENGTHY EXPERIENCE IN WEST BANK AFFAIRS AGREE THAT ISRAEL HAS BEEN PRESENTED WITH A CHALLENGE BY THE ELECTION OF NEW ARAB LEADERSHIP, BUT BELIEVE CHALLENGE CAN BE MET BY DEGREE OF CONTINUITY AFFORDED BY CONTINUED FUNCTIONING OF CLAN SYSTEM. END SUMMARY

1. EMBOFF DISCUSSED RESULTS OF RECENT WEST BANK MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS APRIL 20 WITH LT. COLONEL DAVID FARHI, POLITICAL ADVISOR TO IDF COORDINATOR OF ACTIVITIES IN OCCUPIED TERRITORIES (GEN. ORLY).

2. FARHI TERMED THE ELECTION RESULTS A "SOCIAL AND POLITICAL REVOLUTION," BUT ONE WHICH COULD HAVE BEEN PREDICTED (AND WAS, HE ADDED, BY MANY ISRAELIS CLOSE TO THE WEST BANK SCENE). HE GMINTED TO SUBSTANTIAL INCREASES IN THE NUMBER OF COUNCIL-MEN ELECTED WHO ARE UNDER THIRTY, WHO HAVE HAD MORE THAN
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 TEL AV 02825 230542Z

SECONDARY EDUCATION AND WHO ARE WHITE-COLLAR PROFESSIONALS,

WITH FIGURES AT LEAST DOUBLING IN EACH CATEGORY SINCE 1972 ELECTIONS.

3. OF EVEN GREATER SIGNIFICANCE, FARHI BELIEVES, IS THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE LEADING WEST BANK FAMILIES PUT FORWARD THEIR OWN YOUNGER AND BETTER EDUCATED MEMBERS AS CANDIDATES. THIS INDICATES THAT THE "REVOLUTION" IS TAKING PLACE WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF THE TRADITIONAL CLAN SYSTEM AND IS, IN FACT, INVOLVING THE OLDER RESIDENTS AS WELL, RATHER THAN MERELY DIVIDING THEM FROM THEIR OFFSPRING. FARHI FEELS THAT THIS WILL MAKE A CONTINUATION OF THE DIALOGUE BETWEEN WEST BANKERS AND THE MILITARY GOVERNMENT POSSIBLE, REGARDLESS OF POLITICAL PREFERENCES, SINCE THE YOUNGER LIBERALS ARE IN FACT THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THEIR FAMILIES AND WILL BE FORCED TO TAKE THE INTERESTS OF THEIR ELDERS INTO ACCOUNT IN PRACTICAL MATTERS.

4. FARHI ALSO POINTED TO THE IMPORTANCE OF THE NEW LEADERS RECEIVING LEGITIMIZATION FROM JORDAN IN ORDER TO PROVIDE SUCH BENEFITS TO THEIR CONSTITUENTS AS BIRTH CERTIFICATES, PAYMENT OF JORDANIAN SALARIES OR PENSIONS AND, OF COURSE, JORDANIAN LOANS FOR ONGOING MUNICIPAL PROJECTS. IN ORDER FOR THEIR MUNICIPALITIES TO RECEIVE THESE BENEFITS, MAYORS MUST TAKE THE FORMAL STEP OF SUBMITTING THEIR SIGNATURES TO AMMAN FOR ACCEPTANCE AND JORDAN MUST ACCEPT THEM. FARHI STRESSED THAT THIS PROCESS OBVIOUSLY PLACES CERTAIN CONSTRAINTS ON ANTI-HASHEMITE STATEMENTS AND ACTIONS, WHATEVER THE VIEWS OF A GIVEN OFFICIAL MIGHT BE

5. FARHI SAID THAT BOTH THE NEW LEADERS AND THE MILITARY GOVERNMENT HAVE A CHALLENGE IN MAINTAINING WHAT HE TERMS THEIR "DIALOGUE OF ACTION," EVEN IF IT IS CONCEDED THAT A "DIALOGUE OF IDEAS" IS IMPRACTICAL. THE MILITARY GOVERNMENT FOR ITS PART IS LESS CONCERNED WITH WHAT THE NEW LEADERS SAY THAN WITH WHAT THEY DO. IT SEEKS THEIR COOPERATION AND WILL CONTINUE TO PROVIDE FOR ESSENTIAL SERVICES. BEYOND THOSE THE MUNICIPALITIES THEMSELVES MUST TAKE THE INITIATIVE, AND FARHI IS CONVINCED THAT THE ELECTORATE WILL DEMAND CONTINUING PROGRESS, EVEN IF IT REQUIRES THEIR LEADERS WORKING WITH THE ISRAELI AUTHORITIES.

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 TEL AV 02825 230542Z

6. FARHI SAID THE BROADER POLITICAL FUTURE LOOKS COMPLICATED NOT ONLY FOR ISRAEL BUT ALSO FOR THE PLO AND JORDAN. THE LATTE
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OBVIOUSLY HAS DIFFICULT DECISIONS TO MAKE IN ITS DEALINGS WITH INDIVIDUALS KNOWN FOR THEIR ANTI-HASHEMITE VIEWS. FOR ITS PART, THE PLO MEDIA HAD ALREADY REFERRED TO "THE DANGER OF AN EMERGING ALTERNATIVE LEADERSHIP"

ON THE WEST BANK. PRE-ELECTION VIEWS NOTWITHSTANDING, FARHI BELIEVES THE PLO MAY HAVE ITS OWN PROBLEMS WITH ITS INDEPENDENT-MINDED WEST BANK SUPPORTERS WHO NOW HAVE THEIR OWN PROBLEMS TO SOLVE.

7. IN A PRIOR CONVERSATION, SPECIAL ASSISTANT TO POLICE MINISTER FOR OCCUPIED TERRITORIES (DANON) EXPRESSED SURPRISE AT THE EXTENT OF SUCCESS OF NATIONALIST CANDIDATES. DANON, WHO HAS DEALT WITH WEST BANK AFFAIRS SINCE 1968, SAID HE EXPECTED TWENTY PERCENT, RATHER THAN EIGHTY, OF THE NATIONALIST CANDIDATES TO WIN AND ATTRIBUTED THE ACTUAL RESULTS TO THE RADICALIZING EFFECT OF THE MARCH DISTURBANCES.

8. LIKE FARHI, DANON BELIEVES THAT THE BASIC ELEMENTS OF A CONTINUED DIALOGUE BETWEEN WEST BANK LEADERS AND THE OCCUPATION AUTHORITIES EXISTS IN THE PROVEN STRENGTH OF THE CLAN SYSTEM. HE MENTIONED IN ILLUSTRATION HAVING COFFEE WITH A FORMER JORDANIAN ARMY OFFICER TO CELEBRATE THE ELECTION IN HEBRON OF HIS RADICAL NEPHEW. DANON IS CONVINCED, HOWEVER, THAT A TRUE DIALOGUE WILL REQUIRE CERTAIN CHANGES IN APPROACH ON THE PART OF ISRAELI AUTHORITIES, WHAT HE CALLED "THINKING YOUNGER." HE ADMITTED THAT MISTAKES HAVE BEEN MADE IN HANDLING THE OCCUPATION OF THE WEST BANK, WITH HARMFUL RESULTS WHICH WILL ONLY BE COMPOUNDED NOW THAT A MORE NATIONALISTIC LEADERSHIP IS IN POWER.
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